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THE STORY OF COSMOLOGICAL THEORY¹

I

It may be that primitive man felt none of the

Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized.

For him, perhaps it was enough to taste the joy of living, to watch the rising and the setting of the sun, to gaze upon the mountain, the river and the restless sea, and never to ask himself the question "what is this world in which I live, and how did it come into being?" But this problem eventually presented itself, for there has been implanted within the human breast that which distinguishes its possessor from the beasts which perish, the passion for knowledge, the deep longing for

Authentic tidings of invisible things,
Of ebb and flow and ever-during power:
And central peace subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation.

And so there arose those questions about himself, about the visible universe in which he dwelt, and that invisible world about which he dreamed, from which have sprung all that we now call science and philosophy.

How slow and laborious have been the steps by which knowledge has been attained, and how childish and even grotesque the answers to these first questionings. But to have any theory at all for the first causes of things is very much better than to have none, and these crude products of primitive man, and the refined deductions of the modern scientist are the same at

¹ Opening lecture of the year, delivered at the Autumn Convocation, McMaster University, Toronto.